

THE VOICE OF THE CHOLERA

NO. 705

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 12, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey?
will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon
the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have
taken nothing at all? Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be
afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?”*
Amos 3:3-6.

WE have all felt grieved when reading our bills of mortality to observe the mysterious spread of cholera in our great city. It is high time that it should be made the subject of special prayer, and that the nation should seek unto the Lord for its removal. While as yet there has been but comparatively little of the evil, we should be humbled under it, that we may be spared a greater outbreak.

There are different ways of looking at this disease. Men viewing it from one point of view alone have frequently despised those who have regarded it under another aspect. Occasionally Christian men express themselves indignantly concerning those who speak of cholera as the product of ascertained and governable causes, to be checked and even prevented by due attention to the laws of health. I have never shared in that indignation. It seems to me that this disease is to a great extent in our own hands, and that if all men would take scrupulous care as to cleanliness, and if better dwellings were provided for the poor, and if overcrowding were effectually prevented, and if the water supply could be larger, and other sanitary improvements could be carried out, the disease, most probably, would not occur, or if it did visit us occasionally, as the result of filth in other countries, it would be in a very mitigated form.

I am thankful that there are many men of intelligence and scientific information who can speak well upon this point, and I hope they will never cease to speak until all men learn that the laws of cleanliness and health are as binding upon us as those of morality. So far from a Christian being angry with those who instruct the people in useful secular knowledge, he ought rather to be thankful for them, and hope that their teaching may be powerful with the masses. The Gospel has no quarrel with ventilation, and the doctrines of grace have no dispute with chloride of lime. We preach repentance and faith, but we do not denounce whitewash, and much as we advocate holiness, we always have a good word for cleanliness and sobriety.

We would promote with all our hearts that which may honor God, but we cannot neglect that which may bless our neighbors whom we desire to love even as ourselves. On the other hand, it is even more common for those who look to natural causes alone to sneer at believers who view the disease as a mysterious scourge from the hand of God. It is admitted that it would be most foolish to neglect the appointed means of averting sickness, but sneer who may, we believe it to be equally an act of folly to forget that the hand of the Lord is in all this. The singular manner in which this disease seizes frequently upon unlikely persons and turns aside from its expected path, should show us that there is an unseen hand which directs its gloomy circuit. Let the wise man work below, but fix his hope above, let him cleanse and purge away the hotbeds of death, but let him look up to the Lord and Giver of life for success in all his doings.

It is not my business this morning to describe the sanitary aspect of the subject, this is not the day nor the place, but I shall claim a full liberty to enter into the theological view of it, and if that should happen to excite the contempt of the practical man, we shall be more grieved for his narrowness of mind

than for his contempt of us. We do not despise him, but wish him Godspeed in his reforms, and he should not despise us, but recognize in us his true allies. We believe that God sends all pestilences, let them come how they may, and that He sends them with a purpose, let them be removed in whatever way they may, and we conceive that it is our business as ministers of God, to call the people's attention to God in the disease, and teach them the lesson which God would have them learn.

I am not among those, as you know, who believe that every affliction is a judgment upon the particular person to whom it occurs. We perceive that in this world the best of men often endure the most of suffering, and that the worst of men frequently escape, and therefore we do not believe in judgments to particular persons except in extraordinary cases, but we do nevertheless very firmly believe that there are national judgments, and that national sins provoke national chastisements.

As to individuals, their punishment or reward is reserved for the next state, but nations will not exist in the next world, there is no such thing as a judgment of nations, as such, at the last great day, that will be the judgment of individuals one by one. The trial and punishment of nations takes place in this state, and it is here that we are to look for the judgment of God upon national sin. Upon the present visitation as a national chastisement we shall speak this morning, and I shall not detain you with further preface, but conduct you at once to the questions of the text.

I. THE FIRST QUESTION is a metaphor taken from the traveler, "*Can two walk together except they be agreed?*" which means, being interpreted, that it is no wonder if God does not continue to walk with a sinful people, that it is not to be expected that when a nation falls out with God, God should continue to bless it.

Two travelers have been walking together for some little time, but on a sudden they fall to angry words, and after a while one strikes the other and maltreats him. You cannot suppose that the person thus attacked will continue to walk with him who maliciously assaults him. They must part company. Now, when God walks with a nation, that nation prospers, but if that nation falls to words with God, quarrels with Him about His will and law, and rushes perversely into sinful courses nay, if there be some in it who would have no God at all, who do their best to extirpate His very name from the earth which He Himself has made, then we cannot expect that God should continue to walk with such offenders.

Brethren, let me ask you soberly, without fanaticism, to consider whether there has not been enough in England, and especially in this great city, to make God angry with us? Has there not been grievous disagreement between the dwellers in this city and God? Has there not been enough to make Him say, "I will walk no more with this people: I will chasten them sorely, and send heavy judgments upon them?"

We will not speak of those sins of this city which are common to all other places, but let me ask whether *the drunkenness* of England is not enough to provoke God to strike it with all His thunderbolts. If it be said that there is as much drunkenness elsewhere, I reply that possibly there may be places found which are quite as besotted, where the gin palace blazes with glaring light at every corner, and the gates through which drunkards reel to hell are opened at every turn—it may be so, but I must still hold that there is no other country where drunkenness is carried on to such an extent under so strong a protest, for drunkenness happens to be a sin against which not only the pulpit, the press, and the bench are continually exclaiming, but tens of thousands of earnest, indefatigable, courageous, self-denying men are both by their example and their teaching, denouncing this vice.

We certainly have no deficiency of protests against excess of drink, for there are few companies in which the most sweeping censures are not frequently heard. There is not a place throughout the world where drunkenness is so vehemently and abundantly cried down as in England, there is no place where there is established so strong a public sentiment against this degrading form of self-indulgence. There has been much done, not, I say, only by those who preach the Gospel, which lays the axe at the root of all sin, but also by those who dedicate their strength to the sawing off of this particular limb from the great tree of evil, so that this vice is known by every man to be a vice, and is no longer winked at as a venial offense.

It wears upon its front the damning mark, it is no longer misnamed conviviality, and excused as an amiable weakness. The public mind to a great extent is enlightened upon the subject of strong drink, and consequently this sin of drunkenness is more God-provoking in this country than in any other. There may be countries where there is just as much drunkenness, but none in which the protest is more clear and plain, and we all hold that sin is increased by the measure of light against which a man commits it, and that when an evil practice is by the common consent of mankind denounced and put down, it becomes the more atrocious on the part of those who still pursue it. Alas, alas! this drunken city may well expect that God should visit it.

Moreover, we know enough—and we do not wish to know more of the evil which the moon sees—of *the debauchery* with which certain of the streets of our city are reeking. We thank God it has never come to such a pass in England, that we nationally recognize and systematically regulate lasciviousness, so that it may be indulged in with comparative impunity, but there can be no sort of doubt that amongst all classes and ranks of men there is enough of lewdness to bring down heaven's wrath upon our city. The sins of the flesh are sure to be visited ere long by that God who loathes iniquity, and in whose nostrils fornication is a stench.

He will not forever endure this abounding sin, for it is committed, be it remembered, in a country famous above all others for its love of home and its estimation of the joys which cluster around the family hearth. We have not the pestilential influence of a licentious court and a degraded public opinion, but this sin is carried on in the teeth of a general reverence for purity. Shall not God visit London for the sins which nightly pollute her streets, fester in gilded halls, and riots amid revelry and music? Like a terrible monster, the social evil drags our daughters down to destruction, and our young men to the gates of the grave, and while this lasts we need not wonder if God's health-giving providence should refuse to walk with us, for He cannot be agreed with a people who choose the way of filthiness.

Constant neglect of the worship of God is a sin for which London is peculiarly and pre-eminently guilty. In some of our country towns and villages, the accommodation in places of worship is even larger than the population, and I know places in England where there is scarcely a soul to be found at home at the hour of public worship—certainly not more than absolutely necessary to nurse the sick, care for the infants, and protect the doors, for the whole population turn out to attend a place of worship. But in London the habitual forsakers of public worship are probably in a large majority. It must be so, because we know that even if they wished to go, the provision of seat room is most lamentably short of what they would require, and yet, short as it is, there is not half so much want of churches and chapels in London as there is of inclination to go to either the one or the other.

The masses of our people regard not God, care not for the Lord Jesus, and have no thought about eternal things. This is a Christian city we sometimes say, but where shall be found more thorough heathens than we may find here? In Canton, Calcutta, or even Timbaktu, the people have at least a form of worship and a reverence for some idea of a god, but here tens of thousands make no pretense of religious worship. I protest unto you all that whereas you think Christianity to be well known in our streets and lanes, you only think so because you have not penetrated into their depths, for thick darkness covers the people. There are discoveries yet to be made in this city, that may make the hearts of Christendom melt for shame that we should have permitted such God-dishonoring ignorance, that in the very blaze of the sun, as we think our country to be, there should be black spots where Christian light has never penetrated.

O London! do you think that God's Sabbaths are forever to be forgotten, that the voice of the Gospel is to sound in your ears, and forever to be despised? Shall you forever turn your foot from God's house and despise the ministrations of His truth, and shall He not visit such a city as this? This dreaded cholera is but a gentle blow from His hand, but if it be not felt, and its lesson be not learned, there may come instead of this a pestilence which may reap the multitude as corn is reaped with the sickle, or He may permit us to be ravaged by a pestilence worse than the plague, I mean the pestilence of deadly, soul-

destroying error. He may remove the candle of His Gospel out of its place, and may take away the bread of life from those who have despised it, and then, O great city! your doom is sealed!

Brethren, if there be any one thing which yet provokes God above all this, it is the fact that, *we have once again, as a nation, permitted downright Popery to claim to be our national religion.* Dark is the day, and dismal is the hour which sees the ancient superstitions defiling the houses which are at least nominally dedicated to the God of heaven. In our Established Church the Gospel is no longer dominant, albeit that a little band of good and faithful men still linger in it, and are like a handful of salt amid general putrefaction. We have no longer any right to speak of our national Protestant Church, it is not Protestant, it tolerates barefaced Popery, and swarms with worshippers of the god whom the baker bakes in the oven, and whom they bite with their teeth.

Not many streets from this building in which we are assembled, you may have your candles, and your incense, and your copes, and your albs, with all the other pomp and vanities of the detestable idolatry of Rome. That Romanism against which Latimer bore testimony at the stake has been suffered to hold its mummeries and practice its fantastic tricks in the name of this nation, until it counts its deluded admirers by tens of thousands. That monster, which stained Smithfield with gore and made it an ash heap for the martyrs of God, has come back to you, the old wolf that rent your fathers and tore their palpitating hearts out of their bosoms, you have suffered to come back into your house, and you are cherishing it, and feeding it with your children's meat.

Once again, the harlot of Babylon flaunts her finery in our faces almost without rebuke. Do not tell me it is not Popery, it is the selfsame Antichrist with which your fathers wrestled, and a man with but half his wits about him may see it to be so, and yet this land bears it, and rejoices in it, and crouches at the foot of a priest once more. Our great ones, our delicate women, and dainty lords, are once again the willing vassals of priestcraft and superstition, and amid all this, if any one speaks out, he is assailed as uncharitable, and abhorred as a troubler in Israel. Is it for nothing that God has favored this land with the Gospel? Must all her light be turned to darkness? Must all the gains of the valiant men of old be lost by the sloth and cowardice of this thoughtless generation?

In days of yore, men like Knox and Welch in Scotland, and Hugh Latimer, and John Bradford, fought like lions for the truth, and are we to yield like cowardly curs? Are the men of oak succeeded by the men of willow? The men who cried, "No Popery here!" now sleep within their sepulchers, and their descendants wear the yoke which their fathers scorned. Shall not God visit us for this?

I would that a voice of thunder could arouse this slumbering generation. I am for liberty of conscience for every man, I would have, by all manner of means, the Catholic as free to practice his religion as any one else, I would have religion left to its own native power for its support, and would allow no church to offer to God what it had taken from an unwilling people by the legalized robbery of a church-rate and tithe, but, above all things, if we must be doomed to have an Established Church, I pray God it may not forever be a den of superstition and the haunt of Papistical heresies. If the Church of England does not sweep Tractarianism out of her midst, it should be the daily prayer of every Christian man, that God would sweep her utterly away from this nation, for the old leprosy of Rome ought not to be sanctioned and supported by a land which has shed so much of her blood to be purged from it.

Can two walk together, then, except they be agreed? And as these things cannot be supposed to be agreeable to the mind and will of God, we cannot wonder if there should be a plague upon our cattle, and then a plague upon men, and if these should come sevenfold as heavy as they have ever come as yet.

II. THE SECOND QUESTION of the prophet is, "*Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den if he have taken nothing?*"

Amos had observed that a lion does not roar without reason. By this question he brings forward the second truth, that *when God speaks it is not without a cause*, and especially when He speaks with a threatening voice. My brethren, our God is too gracious to send us this cholera without a motive, and He is moreover too wise, for we all know that judgments frequently repeated lose their force. It is like the cry of "Wolf," if there be no meaning in it, men disregard it. God therefore never multiplies judgments

unnecessarily. Besides, He is withal too great to trifle with men's lives. We heard of some twelve hundred or more who died in a week in London, but did we estimate the aggregate of personal pain couched in that number, the aggregate of sorrow brought to so many hundred families, the aggregate too of eternal interests which were involved in those sudden deaths? Time and eternity, both of them big with tremendous importance, were wrapped up, just so many times in those hundreds who fell beneath the mower's scythe. Think you the Lord does this for nothing? The great Lion of vengeance has not roared unless sin has provoked Him.

Since I have already indicated our great public sins, I should like to ask Christians present how far they have been concerned in them. You who profess to be people of God, and who recognize God's hand in this visitation, I ask you how far has justice found provocation in you? What have you had to do, professing Christians, with *the drunkenness* of this city? Are you sure that you are quite clear of it? Have you by your teaching and by your example shown men that the religion of Jesus is not consistent with drunkenness? Have you tried to put down this vice, or are you in some degree a fellow-criminal, an accomplice before or after the fact? Oh if you have been guilty, I pray you seek to be purged of this sin. You cannot wipe out all the national iniquity, but if each man reformed himself of this vice, by God's grace, this great evil would cease. Let each Christian look at home.

How far you professors of religion—how far are you clear in the matter of *sins of the flesh*? Has there never been any lightness of speech about these sins? When merriment has become uproarious upon impurity, have you never joined in such laughter? And what about *your* course of conversation? Have you always been free—I will not say from the grosser acts of sin—I scarcely like to ask you such a question, but have you been clear from everything that verged upon it? Have you heard ringing in your ears the precept, “Be you holy, for I am holy”? Has the Holy Spirit by His mighty grace kept you from indulging in unclean words and thoughts? Have you in any way fallen into lightness of talk and thought, and so helped to increase the flood of this evil? Oh, my brethren, who among us must not confess to some guilt, when we remember the Savior's words, “He that looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart”? Let us bow our heads in penitence, and seek to the God of all grace that He would not roar over this His prey, but be pleased to purge us from it that we may be clean in His presence.

And so with the other sins which we have indicated. Have we all borne our earnest, fervent protest against them? Have we been negligent of the house of God, or has our continual meeting for public worship cleared us of this? I think most of us are clear here, but I know there are some professors who neglect the assembling of themselves together, who spend their Sabbath occasionally, at any rate, where it ought not to be spent, and who thus by their lax example increase the general forgetfulness of God.

And as to this Anglican Popery—have we spoken out about that? Or do we lend it our direct or even indirect support? God grant that if we have not repudiated it we may do so, and holding the truth in the love and power of it may we come out of Babylon, lest we be partakers of her plagues in the day when God shall visit her in His wrath. Such, I think, was what Amos indicated by his second question.

III. THE THIRD QUESTION is this, “*Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him?*”

The first question was taken from travelers, the second from wild beasts, and the third from fowlers. You see the bird aloft in the sky, on a sudden it flies to the ground, and is taken in the net, now Amos says it would not be taken in the net unless a net had been designedly laid to catch it. It is taken because the snare was meant to take it, and Amos means to remind us that men do not die without a design on God's part. It is the same thought as before, but it is held up in another light. The bird is not taken in the net without the design of the fowler, and men do not fall into the net of death without an intent on God's part.

Death, with all which it involves on earth and in eternity, is not sent by God without a reason. Forever banished from the Christian's conversation be the word “chance.” “It repents me greatly,” says Augustine, “that I ever used that heathenish word *fortuna*,” for fortune or chance is a base heathenish

invention. God rules and overrules all things, and He does nothing without a motive. Brethren, the falling of a sparrow to the earth is in the divine purpose, and answers an end. Every grain of dust that is whirled from the threshing floor is steered with as unerring a wisdom as the stars in their courses, and there is not a leaf that trembles in the autumn from the tree but is piloted by the plan and purpose of the Lord, as much as Arcturus and his sons.

Surely, then, in so great an event as death, involving, as we have already said, so much of pain to the person falling, so much of bereavement and sorrow to the families of those who are smitten, we cannot believe but what God has a purpose. The insatiable archer is not permitted to shoot his bolts at random—every arrow that flies bears this inscription, “I have a message from God for you.” When God permits disease to walk through the streets at night, to stretch out his mighty but invisible hand, and take away here a child, and there a full-grown man, and consign to the grave those who might have otherwise long survived, you will not believe that the Lord commissioned so dread a messenger, without intending to answer some end by his errand. Let us conclude most surely that a purpose, consistent with the love and justice of God, lies hidden in the present harvest of death.

IV. Now follows a FOURTH QUESTION, “*Shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?*” by which he means that the fowler does not remove the net until he has caught his bird, so that this fourth question implies, that inasmuch as God had a purpose in sending tribulation, we may expect that He will not remove it until that design is answered. Whatever God has to say to London, if it be heard at once He need not speak again, but if it be not heard the first time, there shall come a second voice, and yet another. The fowler takes not away his net unless some bird is caught, and God takes not away the trouble which He sends unless He has answered His design by it.

If you ask me what I think to be the design, I believe it to be this—to waken up our indifferent population, to make them remember that there is a God, to render them susceptible to the influences of the Gospel, to drive them to the house of prayer, to influence their minds to receive the Word, and moreover to startle Christians into energy and earnestness, that they may work while it is called today. My reason for selecting this subject at all was that I might be helpful in the hands of God the Holy Spirit to aid this great design, that you, dear friends, might hear at once God’s voice, that so for you, at any rate, it might not be necessary that there should be a repetition of the judgment.

Brethren and sisters, you are acquainted with history, and you have reason to bless God, I am sure, in turning over its pages that we have, during the last half century, been spared many of those dreadful calamities which in former days occurred in this and other lands. Who can read the story of the plague of London without a shudder? And who can close the book without thankfulness that such a black death is unknown among us? Who has read of famines in this land without gratitude for the abundance of bread? Who can turn to the descriptions of the sack and pillage of cities under such armies as those conducted by Tilly, and other savage commanders, without thankfulness that we live in better days? Who can even read the story of the last campaign in Austria without thanking God that our country is an island and that so we are preserved from the horrors of war?

But it is much to be feared that a constant run of prosperity, perpetual peace and freedom from disease, may breed in our minds just what it has done in all human minds before, namely, security and pride, heathenism and forgetfulness of God. It is a most solemn fact that human nature can scarcely bear a long continuance of peace and health. It is almost necessary that we should be every now and then salted with affliction, lest we putrefy with sin. God grant we may have neither famine, nor sword, but as we have pestilence in a very slight degree, it becomes us to ask the Lord to bless it to the people that a tenderness of conscience may be apparent throughout the multitude, and they may recognize the hand of God.

Already I have been told by Christian brethren laboring in the east of London, that there is a greater willingness to listen to Gospel truth, and that if there is a religious service it is more acceptable to the people now than it was, for which I thank God as an indication that affliction is answering its purpose. There was, perhaps, no part of London more destitute of the means of grace, and of the desire to use the means, than that particular district where the plague has fallen, and if the Lord shall but make those teeming thousands anxious to hear the Gospel of Jesus, and teach them to trust in Him, then the design will be answered, and

without a doubt the great Fowler will gather up His net. May it be so, O Lord, for Your Son Jesus Christ's sake.

V. The questions have all worked to one point. We have seen that it is no wonder if disease should come, we have learned that it does not come without a cause, we have seen that when it does come there is a design, and that it will not be removed unless that design be answered, and now we are prepared to take the further step, raised by THE FIFTH QUESTION, namely, that an awakening should be the result. "*Shall the trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?*"

In times of war in the olden times, there were men stationed upon watch towers, and when they saw the enemy coming the cornet was sounded, and the people rushed to arms. The sound of a trumpet was the warning of war. This cholera is like the sound of a trumpet. The voice of the Christian ministry is not heard. Those who go to listen to it do not all hear it, for they hear as though they heard not, while the great mass know nothing, and care less about the preacher's message. The ministry of London is not altogether powerless to those who attend it, but it is utterly without point or force to the dense mass who lie outside the house of God.

Disease, however, is a trumpet which must be heard. Its echoes reach the miserable garrets where the poor are crowded together, and have never heard nor cared for the name of Christ—they hear the sound, and as one after another dies, they tremble. In the darkest cellar in the most crowded haunt of vice, ay! and in the palaces of kings, in the halls of the rich and great, the sound finds an entrance and the cry is raised, "The death plague is come! The cholera is among us!" All men are compelled to hear the trumpet-voice—would to God they heard it to better purpose! Would to God all of us were aroused to a searching of heart, and, above all, led to fly to Christ Jesus, the great sacrifice for sin, and to find in Him a rescue from the greater plague, the wrath to come!

VI. The great end and design of God, then, it seems, is to arouse the city, and that arousing should follow from the fact declared in THE LAST QUESTION, "*Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?*"

Here is not intended moral evil—that rests with man—but physical evil, the evil of pestilence or famine! Shall there be cholera in the city, and God hath not done it? My soul cowered down under the majesty of that question, as I read it, it seemed to stretch its black wings over my head, and had I not known them to be the wings of God, I should have been afraid. The text talked with me in this fashion—It is not the cholera which has slain these hundreds, the cholera was but the sword, the hand which scattered death is the hand of a greater than mere disease. *God Himself* is traversing London. God, with silent footsteps walks the hospitals, enters the chamber, strikes the wayfarer in the street, and chills the heart of the suppliant kneeling by his bed. God, the great Judge of all, at whose girdle swing the keys of death and hell, the mysterious one whose voice bids the pillars of heaven's starry roof to tremble, who made the stars, and can quench them at His will—it was none other than He who walked down our crowded courts, and entering our lanes and alleys called one after another the souls of men to their last account! *God is abroad!*

There are times when God comes especially near to men. He is everywhere, and yet He is frequently described in Scripture as saying, "Let us go down, that we may see whether it be altogether according to the report thereof." God has come down, and is going through this city. Tread solemnly when you go to your business tomorrow morning; you walk the streets where God has walked. You who will go to the cemetery with your dead ones, I had almost said, Put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground, for God is there! The last time this disease was here I had a pervading sense of the presence of God wherever I went. It seemed to me as if the veil between time and eternity were more transparent than usual. If anything ought to compel our attention to God's voice, it should be the remembrance that it is attended with God's presence, and if anything ought to make us feel His rod, it is the fact that it is not the rod that smites, but God Himself that uses the rod.

Leaving the text itself, I want to gather up my thoughts, as God shall help me, in a few earnest words. My dear hearers, I would speak as God's mouth to you as His Holy Spirit shall enable me. Is not the Lord speaking to all of us, both saints and sinners, and warning us to be agreed with Him? O you who are His blood-bought people, believers in Jesus, is there any sin that has parted you from communion with Christ?

Have you fallen into anything which has provoked the Spirit, so that His comforts are withdrawn? If so, by deep humility and earnest prayer, standing at the foot of the cross of the Lord Jesus, pray—

*“Return, Thou heavenly Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast.”*

At all times it is well for the Christian to acquaint himself with God and be at peace, but especially just now. How can you help others, if you yourself have lost the sense of the love of God shed abroad in your heart? I know you are His, and He will never cast you away, but if you do not enjoy His presence you will be as weak as water.

And oh! those of you who are not His people, can you bear to be at disagreement with God? How can He walk with you? You ask His protection, but how can you expect it if you are not agreed with Him? Now, if two men walk together, there must be a place where they meet each other. Do you know where that is? It is at the cross. Sinner, if you trust in Jesus, God will meet you there. That is the place where true at-one-ment is made between God and sinners. If you go repentingly to Jesus, saying, “Have mercy upon my iniquity, wash me in Your blood,” you shall be agreed with God, and then you may look forward to living or dying with equal delight, for if we live we shall walk with God on earth, and if we die we shall walk with God above.

Brethren, while the lion roars, should we not remove any evil which may have caused his anger to burn? Christian, search yourself now and purge out the old leaven. The head of the Jewish household, when the feast of unleavened bread draws nigh, not only puts away the loaves of bread ordinarily used in the household, but takes a candle and searches every part of the house, lest there should be even a crumb of leaven anywhere. He cleans it all out, that he may keep the feast not with leavened bread. Now, Christian, as this is God’s visitation, ask for the candle of the Holy Spirit to discover any *little* sin. Let any little self-indulgence into which we have fallen be conscientiously given up, and for the sake of that dear Savior who denied Himself every comfort for us, let us take up our cross and follow Him, determined that if the lion shall roar, it shall not be because of any prey in us.

And oh, sinner, against whom God has been roaring, do you not remember His own words, “Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” Who can remove the iniquity which provokes the Lord to jealousy, except the dying Savior, the Lord Jesus? He has put away sin by bearing it in His own body, and if you trust Him, there shall be no sin in you to provoke God, but it shall be said of you as of Israel, “In those days, and in that time, says the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.”

Moreover, the Lord our God speaks to us by His providence, and says, “Submit yourselves, this day, to God’s design.” The great Fowler has spread the net, He will not take away that net till He has caught the bird. Be caught in it. Saint, fly not from your God. If He puts out even an angry hand, fly into it, there is no shelter from an angry God but in the pierced hand of His dear Son. When vengeance would strike a heavy blow, the closer you can get to it, the less will it wound you. Get close to God in Christ, cling to Him, and He will not destroy you. Fly to Jesus! Sinner, fly! Be taken in God’s net. Say to God, “What would You have me to do? Would you have me to be Yours? Here I am, Lord, before you take me in the nets of death, take me in the nets of grace. Before the snares of hell prevent me, let the blessed snare of Your eternal love sweetly entangle me. I am, I would be, Yours.”

Be awake, Christian, and be aware of God’s design, for the trumpet is sounding, and when the trumpet sounds, the Christian must not slumber. Let the presence of God infuse into you a more than ordinary courage and zeal. My brethren, I wish I could speak to you this morning as I had hoped to have done, for then I would throw my whole soul into every word, I charge you, as you love Jesus, as you know the value of your own soul, now, if never before, be in earnest for the salvation of the sons of men. Men are always dying, time like a mighty rushing stream is always bearing them away, but now they are hurried down the torrent in increasing numbers. If you and I do not exert ourselves to teach them the Gospel, upon our heads must be their blood. It is God’s work we know to save, but then He works by instruments, and we have His

own solemn word for it, “If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman’s hands.” Are there no houses round your dwelling where Jesus is unknown? Is there no court, no lane, no alley near to where you reside, without God and without Christ? Have you no friends unconverted? Have you no acquaintance unsaved? May there not be even sitting in the pew with you, some unpardoned person? May there not be, Sabbath after Sabbath, sitting in the next seat some one who knows not Christ, who was never warned of his danger or pointed to the remedy? It is a great mercy when the bell tolls if we can say of those who die, “I did all I could to save them from ruin.”

I thought when I read Whitefield’s words to his congregation, I wish I could always say as much. He said, “Ah, souls, if you are lost, it is not for want of praying for, it is not for want of weeping over, it is not for want of faithful Gospel preaching.” I can say the last, but I cannot say the first as I could wish, and yet I know that there are some of you here, who, if you be lost, are not lost for want of warning, nor for want of teaching, nor for want of invitation. We have set before you life and death, we have threatened you in God’s name, and we have invited you by the precious blood of Jesus. Years ago there seemed to be some hope about you, but it was like the morning cloud and the early dew, for you are still unsaved.

When I heard the other day that Mrs. So-and-so was dead, and that she died of cholera, I could not lament, for she was one who had long feared God. When they told me that a worthy young man had fallen, I was sorrowful to have lost so good a student from the College, but I was thankful that one who had served his God so well in his youth had gone to his rest, but if I heard of the death of some of you, it would cause me unmingled grief and fear. Some of you have been sitting here for years who will, I fear, go out of this tabernacle to destruction—you know you will, unless you are changed. If you die as you now are you have nothing to expect but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. Some of you know well the result of sin, and yet you choose it, your consciences prick you often, and yet you run against them, you have been alarmed and so awakened that it seems impossible that you can continue as you are, but alas, you will not turn and your end is coming.

My hearer, I can hardly settle my face to think of your fate, I feel like Elijah when he looked into the face of Hazeel, and trembled as he foresaw his history. It is terrible to think of your doom. He who has warned you and prayed for you will meet you in another world, and when he meets you, you shall not have to say he did not speak plainly and pointedly to you, you will be speechless, because the trumpet was sounded and you did not take the warning, and God was in the city and you would not hear Him, and death spoke as well as the minister, but you stopped both your ears because you were resolved to die, and your heart was set on mischief. You scorn eternal life and choose destruction for the sake of a few paltry pleasures, or a deceitful darling lust which will treacherously stab you through your heart, you let Jesus go, and heaven go, and all this for a moment’s pleasure!

Ah, my hearer, you shall have much to answer for. I speak to you as a dying man, and pray you not to venture into eternal wrath. Give these words some consideration, I pray you, and as you consider them, may God the Holy Ghost fasten them as nails in a sure place, and may you seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near, for this is His word to you, “As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?” and Jesus adds His loving words, “Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” and “the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—AMOS 3.

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